

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-10 and 12-71 are presently active in this case, Claims 12-71 previously withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner and Claims 1-8 amended by way of the present Amendment.

In the outstanding Official Action, Claims 1-2 and 5-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Knudsen Jr.; Claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Knudsen Jr. in view of Otsuka et al.; Claims 1-2 and 4-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Knudsen Jr.; and Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Knudsen Jr. in view of JP 11-348055A to Aria et al.

Turning now to the merits, Applicants' invention is directed to a method and system for delivering and collecting an article delivery-and-collection apparatus used for packing, storing or delivering articles. As described in the Background of the Invention section of the present application, a delivery-and-collection apparatus used for delivering a new product can not be used for collecting the old product, and two separate apparatuses must be brought to the customer site. This makes delivery difficult and less efficient. Applicants' invention is directed to addressing this problem. Moreover, in order to expedite issuance of a patent in this case, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to clarify that the previously claimed rack is an article delivery-and-collection apparatus.

Specifically, Applicants' Claim 1 recites a system for delivering and collecting an article delivery-and-collecting apparatus used for packing, storing or delivering articles, the article delivery-and-collection apparatus being assembled from a plurality of apparatus components stocked at a management center, and repeatedly used for packing, storing or

delivering articles. The system includes a specification unit configured to specify a plurality of first apparatus components required to assemble a first delivery-and-collection apparatus used to pack a first article for delivery to a delivery site, and second apparatus components that are not required to assembled the first delivery-and-collection apparatus yet required to assemble a second delivery-and-collection apparatus used to pack a second article to be collected from the delivery site when the article is delivered. Also recited is an instruction unit configured to provide instructions for a delivery procedure for the first article and a collection procedure for the second article, the instructions including directions for assembling the second delivery-and-collection apparatus using at least one of the first apparatus components along with the second apparatus components specified by the specification unit.

In contrast, the cited reference to Knudsen Jr. discloses a process for storing and retrieving different types of products from a storage warehouse. As shown in Figure 1a of Knudsen Jr., a control system 25 causes a crane (storage retrieval device 18) to receive products from a high rise storage structure having separate storage structures 12a and 12b. As shown in Figure 3, each storage structure 12a and 12b has individual compartments called “racks” 14. The crane 18 moves on a rail between the storage structures 12a and 12b and removes product pallets from the racks and deposits them in a shipping lane 24 where products are picked up from pallets and placed into trucks for shipment. A control system 25 records and maintains current data pertaining to the inventory (quantity of pallets) in each rack 14 or lane 24.

The outstanding Official Action has maintained that the “rack” 14 of Knudsen Jr. corresponds to the previously claimed rack of the present invention. However, there is no discussion in Knudsen et al. about an apparatus used for delivery-and-collection of articles, or a system for delivering and collecting an article delivery-and-collection apparatus as now

recited in Applicants' independent Claim 1. Indeed, Knudsen Jr. does not disclose an article delivery-and-collection apparatus at all.

As Knudsen Jr. does not disclose an article delivery-and-collection apparatus, this reference also does not disclose the claimed limitation of:

“a specification unit configured to specify a plurality of first apparatus components required to assemble a first delivery-and-collection apparatus used to pack a first article for delivery to a delivery site, and second apparatus components that are not required to assemble the first delivery-and-collection apparatus yet required to assemble a second delivery-and-collection apparatus used to pack a second article to be collected from the delivery site when the article is delivered.”

In addition, Knudsen Jr. does not disclose the limitation of:

“an instruction unit configured to provide instructions for delivery procedure for the first article and a collection procedure for the second article, the instructions including directions for assembling the second delivery-and-collection apparatus using at least one of the first apparatus components, along with the second apparatus components specified by the specification unit.”

As noted in the Background section of the present specification, it is this feature of the present invention that reduces the amount of shipping apparatus equipment necessary to deliver a new product and retrieve an old product from a customer site. Knudsen Jr.'s disclosure of moving articles from storage areas to a shipping area in no way relates to Applicants' present invention. Thus, Applicants' Claim 1 patentably defines over Knudsen Jr. Moreover, the secondary references to Otsuka et al. and Aria et al. are cited for features in the dependent claims and do not correct the deficiencies of Knudsen Jr. Therefore, Applicants' Claim 1 patentably defines over the cited references. Moreover, as Claims 2-10 depend from Claim 1, these claims also patentably define over the cited references.

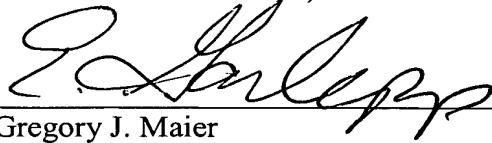
Consequently, in view of the present Amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in

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condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

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